Trinity Health is one of the largest not-for-profit, Catholic health care systems in the nation, serving diverse communities across 25 states. We advocate for public policies that promote care for the common good including expanding health care coverage and care, investing in public health, paying for high-value care, and improving the health of communities.

**Addressing Racism as a Public Health Crisis**

Trinity Health acknowledges that racism exists in the health care delivery and financing system. Furthermore, it is a root cause of health inequities. Racism manifests in many ways, including limiting access to care, restricting affordability, exacerbating biases that impact health care decision making, and health outcomes. Because of its pervasiveness, Trinity Health believes that racism is a public health crisis.

The Trinity Health Mission and Core Values compel us to advocate for change to the structural and systemic policies that limit and shape opportunities for Black and Brown people. The Core Values of reverence, commitment to those who are poor, safety, justice, stewardship and integrity guide this work to improve the health of all communities and dismantle barriers to inequities in health care.

It is a public health crisis when racial groups disproportionately experience significant differences in health care coverage, access and outcomes:

- **Insurance Coverage**: Black people are 1.5 times and Hispanic people are 2.5 times more likely to be uninsured than whites (19.0 percent and 11.5 percent vs. 7.5 percent).  
- **Health Outcomes**: Infant mortality for Black infants (10.9 per 1,000 live births) is two times higher than for whites (4.7).  
- **COVID-19 Infection and Hospitalization Rates**: COVID-19 infection rates for Black Medicare beneficiaries were almost 2.5 times higher (1,658 per 100,000) than for whites (712 per 100,000). Between January and June 2020, Medicare hospitalization rates for Black people were 670 per 100,000; Hispanics 401 per 100,000; and whites 175 per 100,000.  
- **Access to Health Services**: Black and Hispanic people are more likely to experience longer wait times and understaffed COVID-19 testing centers.

Trinity Health is identifying clinical, organizational and community levers to fight racism in the health care delivery system and shares the policy principles outlined below to guide discussion with federal, state and local policymakers.

**Ensure Funding and Support for COVID-19 Testing and Vaccine Access for All**

When increasing testing and immunization capacity, communities of color should benefit from policies that:

- Require robust data collection and public reporting of testing and vaccine access that includes race/ethnicity.

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Racism – A Public Health Crisis

• Encourage strong partnerships across health systems and community-based organizations, public health departments and others to support access to testing and treatment.
• Fund, expand and promote community-based sites for immunization and testing (e.g. school-based health centers, mobile clinics, and drive-thru testing and vaccination options) to ensure visible access in all communities.
• Support community health workers who provide education and outreach on testing and vaccine services to ensure availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate materials and provide linkages to social services.
• Prioritize at-risk groups, including elders and people with co-morbidities, when designing plans for vaccine distribution.

Create Equal Access to Affordable Coverage and Care
Improving the health of individuals and communities experiencing the effects of racism requires ensuring access to affordable health coverage and care by supporting policies that:
• Ensure a strong safety net with Medicaid expansion in every state.
• Maintain insurance market reforms that support continuous coverage without exclusions for pre-existing conditions.
• Promote enrollment in health insurance with high-functioning insurance marketplaces.
• Guarantee access to essential health benefits as defined in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act.
• Guard against excessive out-of-pocket health care costs that impose financial burden on patients.
• Expand telehealth offerings to beneficiaries in Medicaid and marketplace plans.
• Promote digital literacy and access to broadband and other digital health technologies that support access to care.

Eliminate Health Disparities Resulting from Inequities in System
Health disparities can be eliminated by addressing the drivers of those outcomes in the system, this includes supporting policies and providing funding to:
• Address social influencers of health -- housing, education, employment, food, and access to broadband and digital technologies -- that reinforce better health outcomes.
• Require data collection that includes race/ethnicity to identify where disparities exist and must be addressed (e.g. maternal and child health, chronic diseases, opioid use disorder).
• Support development and funding for targeted clinical and public health interventions that close gaps in the prevalence of chronic conditions, which exacerbate inequities in outcomes related to COVID-19 and other communicable diseases.
• Build a diverse health care workforce that understands community needs and can build relationships and trust.

Encourage and Fund Community Collaboratives that Address Racism
Addressing racism will require collaboration across community stakeholders, which can be advanced by policies that:
• Fund community collaboratives that bring together residents, all levels of government, social services, health care, law enforcement, the business community, employers, community-based organizations and other stakeholders to identify, develop and implement strategies to target inequities and disparities.
• Identify and disseminate best practices and lessons learned from community collaboratives that address healthcare inequities and disparities.
• Identify and disseminate best practices and lessons learned from community collaboratives that engage in implicit bias training.
• Incentivize partnerships across sectors that build awareness for policies that address the socioeconomic and health inequities caused by institutional racism.

“We cannot tolerate or turn a blind eye to racism and exclusion in any form and yet claim to defend the sacredness of every human life.”
- Pope Francis, June 3, 2020

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